



A QUARTERLY LITERARY EXHIBIT

Summer 1922

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CLAY ::

Vol. I, No. 2
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The New Dawn (A Play)

By DAVID LIEBOVITZ

The office of WILLIAM CRAWFORD, manager of the Apollo Theater in the basement of the Apollo building.

There is a small window in the right wall, under it a desk at which CRAWFORD is seated, reading a play-manuscript. His head is large, his features regular and handsome, his complexion ruddy. His feet repose squarely on the red-green carpet, a sign that he is out to conquer, to get there, to stay when he has found his position.

The secretary, MARGARET FORSTHE, is unobtrusively placing letters in a file, left, beside her desk. There is a slight air of superiority in the strong formation of her nose; delicacy of feeling in the pale, firm forehead. Her manner is thoughtful, smiling, restrained; her eyes watch the interlocutor intelligently but not critically.

It is early afternoon of a glowing April day, and the mellow sun rolls in through the windows and paints a golden triangle on the soft carpet.

One door, left, leads out; a second door in the rear—the color of the walls—leads up to the stage through a narrow passage.

CRAWFORD: Has Morris started the rehearsal?

MARGARET: Yes.

CRAWFORD (*stowing manuscript*): I must go up. If anybody comes, I am busy.

MARGARET (*turning*): Mr. Crawford, if it isn't too much to ask—

CRAWFORD: What is it, Margaret?

MARGARET: My request—did you forget?

CRAWFORD: Do you really want to go on the stage?

MARGARET: I've quite made up my mind, and I ask you again

for a chance.
CRAWFORD: You're an excellent secretary. I don't know if you would make as good an actress, my charming girl.

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By

THE CLAY GUILD

MARGARET (*thoughtfully*): But I have confidence in myself. You said Miss Bolling wouldn't do in the role of Susan.

CRAWFORD: But her part requires an experienced actress.

MARGARET: I have acted.

CRAWFORD: Only in private theatricals.

MARGARET: No, with Rothman. He likes my work, and has asked me to join his repertory company. I am likely to accept unless

you give me a definite answer.

CRAWFORD: Take my advice and don't listen to him. You know that his art theories led to the smash up of his theatre?

MARGARET: Again?

He bows gallantly.

CRAWFORD: Naturally—since he's impractical. The truth is his days are over and there's just the remains of an old man's dream.

He has been after me for some time, and I just managed to escape him at the door. He may want to see you. (*Touched in conscience.*) I didn't like to cold shoulder the old fellow who has helped me in his day.

In some ways I owe him a great deal.

MARGARET: And now you speak against him that way.

CRAWFORD: But art is disinterested; many apply, few are chosen. *Tempus fugit.* (*He turns to go.*) Sick to us, and rely on me to back you personally. You are lovely standing there in the sunlight (*Going to her; gently, affectionately.*) If you must act, I may arrange something very soon to surprise and please you.

MARGARET: I know that you mean well, Mr. Crawford, but you always put me off in the same evasive way.

CRAWFORD: I like to have you right here—with me—Margaret. That's the reason—(*Goes to embrace her.*)

MARGARET: Mr. Crawford! Please!

CRAWFORD: That means my dismissal!

MARGARET: That means my dismissal! (*A voice without:* "Ack!") There's Jackson. If Rothman comes, tell him I'm awfully busy. Au revoir!

He picks up the manuscript and goes out through the rear door.

MARGARET (*stamping*): Oh!

She sinks into her seat, and begins to typewrite nervously; makes a mistake and draws out the spoiled sheet, listening to somebody moving about outside. She inserts another sheet. There is a rap on the door.

MARGARET: Who is it? (*Rising*) Come in, please.

ROTHMAN enters . . . a smile across his wide mouth, his old

sunken eyes in the large gray face dull with dying fires. Rothman is a German. He wears a mouldy spring coat, a relic like his crushed hat, of more prosperous days.

ROTHMAN (*raising his hat—with gallantry*): Gut afternoon, Miss Forsythe; how do you do on this beautiful spring day?

MARGARET: Good afternoon. (*They shake hands.*) Won't you sit down and rest, Mr. Rothman?

ROTHMAN (*putting on his musk*): Rest? Do I haf to rest? Dere ist more enerchie in dis body dan you tink, Miss Forsythe. (*He smiles wanly, shrugs his shoulders, and sinks wearily.*) He haf a beautiful room. It is more decorated since I saw it last. (*Looking about.*) Actresses. . . . (*with a touch of envy*) gif him der pictures?

MARGARET (*lonely*): Yes.

ROTHMAN: Ah! Suggests! (*He nods his head knowingly.*) Und where ist Mr. Crawford? Not in his den?

MARGARET: I'm sorry, but he's just gone up to the rehearsal.

ROTHMAN: His new play? "Der French Husband?" (*Margaret nods.*) You tink he vill come down soon? I am very much in a hurry. (*Glancing at watch.*) My time ist occupied. Maybe you'd like to call him?

MARGARET (*perplexed*): I think we'd better not call him now. Can I do anything for you?

ROTHMAN: You? No. (*His mask drops for a moment in his annoyance; putting it on again.*) Vell, what is the news? I did not forget you, Miss Forsythe. You are a real actress mit a gracious personality. Und here you are in his office! But at least you are going to have a role in dis . . . (*probing her*) hein?

MARGARET: No, not in this. . . .

ROTHMAN: No? Why?

MARGARET: In his next production.

ROTHMAN (*his eyes atwinkle*): Ah, in der next production! (*He smiles knowingly.*) But you haf esprit, a beautiful body . . . ; such arms and such a neck do not come efery day on die stache. Is Crawford blind? (*Margaret is silent as Rothman probes her.*) Rothman hat eyes to see what ist beautiful . . . Listen (*cautiously, whispering*), why not come to me when I start my theatre? Leaf him for a real theater here in America, a free stache?

MARGARET: But are you really going to start such a theatre?

ROTHMAN: What? You haf not heard? Why you denk I come here? To ask for ein chob?

MARGARET (puzzled): But have you . . .

ROTHMAN: Backing? Dere ist der rub. So far I have only der plans in mein head. Dey are not Grillen. It ist going to be like die *Deutsche Freie Bühne*. Your philistine theater vill go und der people's theater vill take its place, ein popular stache because all great art must be based on der folk in dis ache off der people. You understand? But ail dis I tell you as a secret because dere ist something in you dot draw eferying out off me. I should not tel ein soul till my plans have been realized; but dot realization—it depend on—Mr. Crawford.

MARGARET: Mr.—Crawford!

ROTHMAN: Yes; und he vill listen. He owe me much. It was I, Rothman, who gafe him his start.

MARGARET: When was that, Mr. Rothman?

ROTHMAN: Not long ago; but men chance quickly in dis country. He had a liddle tiny soul vunce—when he was mit me—but s'gess vash it away. Dere may be a pebble, a grain off sand left; he must guard it, dis Mr. Crawford, guard it vell; und if he listen, I vill make him a great man in a democratic theater. . . . Vell? Vill you join us?

MARGARET (fencing): There is nothing I would like better.

But you must give me time.

ROTHMAN: Of course. But ist dere a more auspicious time to gif—*Bewegung*—how do you call it?

MARGARET: Momentum?

ROTHMAN: *Ach, ja, momentum!* (*Margaret is silent.*) It ist der season off der burgeoning seed. You must excuse me if I do not speak your English very well. But my meaning ist quite clear. (*Thumping the table.*) Now ist der time! Und I feel *meine Macht* return to me at dis moment. I see all my plans for a theater dot I haf dreamed off since I come to America. Efery spring I formulate die plans, but dey come to nuffing, und in der winter I start und despair; but in der spring der seed begin to open, die lilac bloom as nefer before, und dot ist a prophesy for me. (*He shuts his eyes in a dream.*) *Sonnenaufgang!* . . . a new dawn in America; . . . die sun rise und here I am to salute it like I do in Chemany when I disceder Hauptmann! I always come to greet a new day like I am drawn to der beautiful in you, Miss Forsythe. (*Roused.*) Enough! I haf told you eferying. I must speak to Mr. Crawford—tell him my plans vill not wait long. Vill you call him, Miss Forsythe?

MARGARET (rising, perplexed): If he is not too busy . . . I'd like to call him.

ROTHMAN: Busy? Too busy for dis? No! He is not so much of a fool. Go, go. He vill understand.

She goes out. As soon as the door is shut behind her, his mask drops; hilarity, enthusiasm, gentleness, flee from his physiognomy like black-birds from an oak, and his features become hard, severe. The gay actor has disappeared, the man of profound sorrows stands in his place. With head lowered he walks to and fro.

ROTHMAN (declining):

"Lo, he is fallen, and around great storms and the outreaching sea! Therefore, O Man, beware, and look toward the end of things that be, The last of sighs, the last of days; and no man's life account as gain. Ere the full tale be finished and the darkness find him without pain."

MARGARET (*who has entered, listening*): Beautiful!

ROTHMAN (*glowing*): You come on soft feet like a doff mit a spring off happy messages. Nun?

MARGARET: He says he is still busy.

ROTHMAN (aggrieved): Too busy to see me? I shall go up to him!

He stalks out through the rear door. Margaret stands for a moment in sorrow and perplexity and then opens the door and goes to call him back. Crawford comes in through the left door in an angry mood.

CRAWFORD: Miss Forsythe, did you send Rothman up?

MARGARET (turning): Yes. He wanted to see you just this once. . . . You're not going to turn him away?

CRAWFORD: Really, Margaret, you make me feel cruel; but I cannot use him now; he's an old stage!

He turns to go.

MARGARET: Mr. Crawford!

CRAWFORD: Don't you und'stand, Margaret? He'll want to turn everything topsy-turvy here and make this his repertory theater to represent the new currents. But life is always the same. There is no new current. It exists in the old man's head. He still tells people: "I am the best director in America! With me is the American idea!"

MARGARET (*softly*): Perhaps . . . it is.

CRAWFORD: Has he bewitched you? You seriously believe in his dreams?

MARGARET: You did once.

CRAWFORD: When I was younger . . . and he was in his prime. MARGARET: Wasn't he of some help to you then?

CRAWFORD: You work on my conscience.

MARGARET (*stubbornly*): I like people with conscience.

CRAWFORD: I'll believe you're in love with him. (*He laughs, banishing the idea.*) Tell Morris to go on with the rehearsal. I shall see him for whatever good it will do.

She goes out through the door as Rothman enters from the left.

CRAWFORD: Hello, Rothman, old fellow. Glad you haven't forgotten me.

ROTHMAN: I haf chust dropped in to see your rehearsal. It is excellent; der play will go. *Aber!* Your leading actress, Miss Derick, she does not use her body. Die Americans act only mit der face. But what did I teach you so thoroughly? Dot der whole body act, legs, breast, arms, back, everything—the whole human structure speak to der audience in its own language. She ist as stiff and awkward as a virchin; but she ist not a virchin in der play; she ist not eben ein honest wife. Hein?

CRAWFORD: True enough.

ROTHMAN (*encouraged*): Dot its number vum. *Hör ein Mal.* I, who founded die "*Freie Bühne*" and helped die Cherman stache to achieve its little success, I do not stick in der mud, but I vatch peoples, listen to der speech, catch die *Bewegung*—der motifs, central ideas, *sozusagen*. You must do dot!

CRAWFORD (*tolerantly*): What makes you think I don't, Rothman?

ROTHMAN: When I see how you permit der husband to act, I am sure you haf not been vatching peoples, but perhaps you haf been living in some perfumed lady's boudoir?

CRAWFORD: Rothman, keep off the grass; you forget that I am not your pupil any more.

ROTHMAN: No, der situation ist reversed; you are up, I am—down. You haf power! Excuse me, I did not intend to intrude in your boudoir.

CRAWFORD: Nonsense! I was only joking. Sit down (*Rothman sits wearily*) I want you to speak freely.

ROTHMAN: But if I spoke freely now. . .

CRAWFORD: Go ahead.

ROTHMAN: Yes? Then first I would tell you dis is no play to put on! Not for your theater!

CRAWFORD: Why?

ROTHMAN: It does not represent der *Zeitgeist*. Dis is ein actle von workmen, creators, doers who accomplish tings. (*Crawford is silent*) Men smoke cigarettes in lady's boudoirs only when dey haf inherited der faders dollars, und dese pupples are not so interessant as der faders . . . dey do not represent die real forces. (*Crawford is silent. Rothman, feeling his impotence before Crawford, one of the real forces, shrugs his shoulders. His mask drops for a moment.*) . . . But you haf made up your mind to do "Der French Husband?"

CRAWFORD: It's in rehearsal.

ROTHMAN: Demm you must go on. But listen what you should do: take Winn out von der cast—he is a puppet von a boudoir, not der husband.

CRAWFORD: Perhaps. But you have too high an idea of the American actor if you think I can get a better. (*Cold and hard.*) I have to stick to practicals, hitch my star to a motor-bus, you know.

ROTHMAN: But I see a culture developing, und you must work for dot. Where die flower has to bloom dere ist so much sand. (*Crawford listens.*) Vee must manure it mit our industry, inspirations; without continual vatching, it will die like so many beautiful flowers dot haf shown promise to bloom.

Crawford reflects.

CRAWFORD: True. But after all I have to consider the public and its favorites.

ROTHMAN: But do you haf to consider favorites in art? (*He shrugs his shoulders.*) Den you are chust like any udder producer?

CRAWFORD: Yes.

ROTHMAN: I do not find the same enthusiasm. You, too, vunce had a hope. What has happened? Why do I not find der same man?

CRAWFORD: The soil is sterile, Rothman.

ROTHMAN: *Nein!* You are still der man, but you must haf courage. Produce dis play—it ist not so bad—*aber!* Produce it perfectly—mit actors!

CRAWFORD (*concerned*): Who shall I put in Winn's part?

ROTHMAN: I do not know anybody who can act der husband better dann—Rothman.

CRAWFORD (*taken aback*): Yourself as the young husband?

ROTHMAN: Why not? I sacrifice myself to it because vee must start somewhere; a beginning. It is enough! I shall do it!

CRAWFORD: But I mean you are not young. . .

ROTHMAN: Dot make no difference. I am an artist. Here I am young in my head. (*Waking to and fro.*) But der acting is only a small tng. Now I shall speak freely: your direction—it is faulty.

CRAWFORD: I know what you're driving at, Rothman.

ROTHMAN: *Nein!* I can gife you suggestions, inspirations! Dot ist what I mean—dot ist all!

CRAWFORD: That is—if you direct this play?

ROTHMAN: *Ja!*

CRAWFORD: But your ideas are impractical and old-fashioned. Rothman. Your last production—"Rosmestholm"—pardon me, if I drag up the old bones—

ROTHMAN: *Well?* (*Infinitely pained.*) I had a failure. Dot can happen to anybody—a mistake.

CRAWFORD: But do you recall how you did it? I mean you are too heavy—you cling to your Hauptmann, Bahr and company, as if they were the last word in the drama when their naturalism is dead.

ROTHMAN: Denn you will say next—I am dead?

CRAWFORD: Well, you belong to the old school.

ROTHMAN (*bewildered by the blow*): But art is vun tng, und naturalism is vun side off it.

CRAWFORD: There's a change in public taste—that's the point—and I follow the currents.

ROTHMAN: But you are only following our European fashions. Dere ist no digging down in der soil. When you dig down you will find nuggets. (*Confused.*) I haf always understood dere ist sweep, poetry, in a great naturalism.

CRAWFORD: Perhaps there are too many facts and not enough fancy.

ROTHMAN: Fancy? (*He shrugs his shoulders.*) Denn it ist chust like your fashion in dresses, nutting else. You vill dress up der human soul, too? But dere ist vun tng I vas taught in my school dot ist engraved mit a needle in my mind: dot dere ist nutting so sacred as der human gesture, der sacred human impulse from der naked soul. . . . Naked like *mein Herz* in *mein Körper*. Dot is eternal! Und you play mit it at your own peril! . . . I see it ist no use to talk. . . . Vee pass in two different directions . . . but I shall do what I can for you und act der husband. Only I must get something in advance on my contract.

CRAWFORD: I can lend you some money, but I'm afraid I can't employ you—Rothman.

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ROTHMAN: Denn I ask for nutting.

He turns to go.

CRAWFORD: The trouble with you, Rothman, is that you have faith in your art, but you haven't in the changing currents of life; or else you would turn with the tide.

ROTHMAN: You mean I should be a sophist and *chance* mit der fashion? *Hein?* I do not do dot, eben if fashion pass me, und maybe it do. . . . Perhaps dis ist not der great democratic ache—dis ist der time from froh und disillusion, und your art is proper for it. But I haf created something dot ist ein immortal pyramid in der deserts von life, while you chust roll on der crests von der wafes. Perhaps in a hundred years dey shall say I am young while you are old, a very old man, und dere ist flowers in my heart while yours ist dried up like a harlot's—for she, too, believed in life like dot. What shall you say denn?

CRAWFORD: I shall be dead then.

ROTHMAN: But I shall be alive! Dot ist my consolation, eben if I start!

CRAWFORD: I must leave you now.

ROTHMAN (*flaring up*): Do you dismiss me?

CRAWFORD: I wanted to make you an offer but you rejected it.

ROTHMAN: To act the husband?

CRAWFORD: No, not the husband.

ROTHMAN: Vee artists do not crawl in der mud. I pick der seeds from der tree, but I do not peck on der ground like a chicken. Not eben for der fashionable king! I go steadfast . . . und Got remember His chosen und grant der vork immortality. Und you—you will not be vun von der noble. For your suggest you do not seek great vorks but great names. You vill drink yourself to death when you discofer dot suggest ist empty; but your drink vill not be ambrosia. It ist mine.

CRAWFORD: Rothman, Rothman, you're talking wildly—you must be mad!

ROTHMAN (*trembling*): Mad? You say so? To me? You can only demean an old man dot taught you—by such ein offer—und now you tell me I am in my dotache? You tink I do not know what you haf told udders? Yesterday und last week und before!

CRAWFORD: What did I say?

ROTHMAN: But I know it. I haf heard! I know you—what you haf become! (*With pitiful entreaty.*) Perhaps you did not say

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it und I am wrong? (*Sinking into himself.*) *Merkwürdig: dey all say de same ting, vunce he start der rumor. Dot is how he protect himself—by slander—because he is afraid to follow me. I hoped—when I died, he would go on: pupil and master! But no—when I talk—dey all listen, pitying; und when I call again, dey are not dere. I am in my dotache! . . .* So! I do not ask for quarter—least from you. I shall find vun who does not tink I am chist mad because I hold stead-fast by my art!

(*He walks slowly to the door and paces heavily, out of breath.*) Where? To whom shall I go? (*He stops suddenly, and his knees sag under him.*) What do dey mean—dotache? (*Pressing his hand against his forehead.*) Der brain ist not so healthy as it vas? Yet my brain vas nefe more beautiful und serene. No, it ist not serene. Can it be? (*He shrugs his shoulders helplessly.*) I am seventy year old. I haf done good work. Democracy vant me no more. Perhaps like an old horse, I should be allowed to graze in ein field? Ask yourself, Rothman. You should speak der truth to yourself; you haf nefe lied. *Hat er recht? Recht? Wer? (Quivering.) But where shall I graze?*

CRAWFORD: Rothman, consider my proposition. (*Rothman draws back as if from a slap on the cheek.*) Don't try to raise tulips in sand; only beach-grass grows there.

Rothman slowly turns to Crawford with big empty eyes. There is a knock. Margaret enters.

MARGARET: I brought some contract blanks along. I thought you might want them.

CRAWFORD: Well, Rothman? Will you raise beach grass with me?

ROTHMAN (*reviving*): You mean I should take der lead? (*Crawford is silent.*) *Hein?*

CRAWFORD: Not in this play; but there's another role. . . .

ROTHMAN: Below Vinn? He should be my master? (*Turning to go.*) Dank you. (*Facing Crawford.*) I do not degrade myself. . . . Not efen in die end. Not efen for all off you. A bird, when he ist ready to die, fly off to some beautiful plain or tree where no eye can vatch him—for he ist noble to himself to die end. (*Turning.*) Fly, fly away, Rothman. You who haf gone so high are blown away by fashion. *Die frie stache, it fall mit you! Forty wounds tear you in der heart; but Caesar, when he vas stabbed by der conspirators, as*

his last act, cofered himself und his wounds mit his toga, so he might die like an emperor.

CRAWFORD: Rothman!

ROTHMAN: (*straightening*): Leave—me. I go as I came—sacred to myself.

He goes out with a sharp glitter in his darkened eyes.

MARGARET (*softly*): He was—a—hope. Now there's nothing.

CRAWFORD: Margaret. . . .

MARGARET (*sadly shaking her head*): Nothing. . . . What will he do? He seems to be penniless. . . . wounded. . . .

There is a knock.

JACKSON (*without*): It's Jackson; somebody's stumbled out here.

CRAWFORD: It's Rothman—

Crawford runs out to return a moment later supporting the injured Rothman on his arm. He places Rothman on a chair. The old man's heavy face sinks on his chest and his eyes close.

MARGARET: Fetch some water, please! He's fainted!

ROTHMAN (*coming to*): I haf. . . . greeted. . . . der new dawn, "Sonenaufgang." Now it ist twilight before me. Tomorrow, it shall be a new Tag. (*He attempts to rise.*)

MARGARET: You—must—stay with us! Mr. Rothman!

ROTHMAN: I do not need help. (*He shakes his head with a slow weary smile.*) It vas a moment off weakness; but I haf not much time. . . . (*To imaginary people.*) Come! Now it rain in my face. (*He pauses, bewildered.*) *Keine Sonne! Kein Frühling in der Luft! Keine Hoffnung! KEIN SONENAUFGANG!!*

(*He goes out unsteadily.* CURTAIN.)

The Sleeping Prince

By ALTER BRODY

Stunned by a blow more fatal than he thinks
He calls himself a sleeping prince,
Awaiting a princess who will come
And wake him.

He cannot fuse the vapors of his thoughts
Into a picture of her—
But she'll be a buoyant bugle
Rallying his routed soul.

A sort of a vivid wonderful thing
Like a shaft of fervid flame
She'll pierce the blur before his eyes
And point the way.

She'll clear the clot within his brain
With surging thoughts;
She will repeople his heart
With all its dreams.

Youth will thaw out in the ruts of his face,
In a dazzle of sun-shot cascades,
When she shatters that frozen clamp on his brow
With the touch of her lips.

And he'll rise with her love in his heart
Like a dawn unfurling,
With eyes flashing back the sunlight
Like haughty high-perched windows.

And together they'll climb and conquer
Together they'll soar to the sun
There'll be no goal beyond their wings
When that day comes.

Meanwhile he sifts through the sieve of his dreams
This one and that one he knows
But he's sure it isn't the princess
For—wasn't he still asleep?

So he hops like a crippled dog
Through the cold inhospitable streets,
Eyeing each woman askance—
Perhaps it's the princess!

And some of them feel uncomfortable
To be stared at so—
But nobody knows it's the sleeping prince
Seeking his princess.

The Pigeon-Coop

By ALTER BRODY

In the dizzying dimness behind the checkered wires,
Between the dust-blurred windows of the kitchen-doorway and the
dust-blurred glass of the door
They move as in some shadow of a world
Seen within dream-bulged eyeballs—
Tangibly close,
Within reach of eye and ear and hand;
Yet so intangibly remote
Removed from earth by some elusive impenetrable film—
Strangely unreal and yet so real,
Pungent with life:
Breathing, eating, excreting sex-impelled life
Passionately living its circumscribed span
As if it is free!
A hand is thrust through the netted wires,
Vague and vast,
Working irresistibly its will.
And sometimes it is life:—
Strewn heaps of corn smelling like fresh-turned earth;
Trays of cold clear water sharp with the flavor of rust.
And sometimes it is death:—
A long, muffled journey and a swift burning end
At the hot sting of the knife.
And sometimes it is love:—
Separated from the rest by the caprice of the hand,
They are imprisoned with another of their kind
In a coop within the coop—
Until a force unwinding within them like a wound-up spring
Draws them together in a steel embrace,
Mating them like the spliced wires of their coop.
But all is hidden from their little eyes,

Dazed by the interplay of quick desires
That drive them like harnessed horses here and there,
Blinding them to everything but the moment's goal
With invisible blinkers.
Corn is good for hunger and water gladdens the throat.
Love is warm and close, and Death is far and vague—
An unsubstantial horror lurking for its prey
On the outskirts of their lives.
There are eggs to be kept warm and little ones to feed
And the wires are dizzying to look at. . . .

But sometimes in the purple twilight,
When the grey dimness colors into night,
A hush comes upon the fluttering, cooing coop
Deepening with the deepening twilight—
And they perch motionlessly upon their dung-crustad sticks
Huddled within the sheltering shadows;
And stare through the blurred wires into the lighted kitchen,
And backward through the blurred windows into the dark enfolding
sky—
Dumbly interrogative,
Until their eyes shut with sleep,
Gazing through an inexplicable network of confining wires
Into a world imprisoned by its own walls.

Still Waters

By ISAAC KLOOMOK

I was born and brought up in a big city but was cast by fate into a small Jewish town in a Western province of Russia, where I became a tutor.

It was hard for me to live in that small, muddy, unpaved, unlighted town with its few hundred poor, low, wooden houses crowding into one another, with their mouldy green shingled roofs, their crooked black chimneys and their heaps of refuse at each threshold. Harder still was my living among the hairy, uncouth, small-town people, their ill-bred, idle, sophisticated sons and their big-bellied, stocky daughters, and the dull, stupid customs and habits that obtained among them.

Life there would soon have become unbearable if it had not been for Zeviah.

Zeviah was the daughter-in-law of Motte the baker, to whose home I went daily to teach the younger children.

There was a houseful of children. Looking at their mother, a small, shriveled woman with eyes red and bleary from constant service at the oven, I always wondered that from her loins had come forth such a brood. She had six daughters and four sons; the daughters like the sons: tall, robust, with large mouths and big teeth, with powerful voices. They all took after their father.

Three daughters and the oldest son were married, and the sons-in-law and the daughter-in-law lived in Motte's house. When the whole clan would gather it was a fearful thing to approach the house. But they were never long together. The mother managed this host of giants with the ability of an old general, and as soon as they came into her sight, she dispatched each one to his job. She had a task for each of them.

In addition to being a bakeshop, Motte's house was also a dram shop, to which came merchants and peasants. Motte and his children traded with his visitors, bought and sold crops, livestock, hog-chistles,

sheep's wool, hides and fowl. In the large, spacious house, in the stalls, in the courtyard, in the big outhouses, and on the grounds round about there was a perpetual fair. In the entire house there was not a corner shut to the noises of the market, except Zeviah's room on the upper floor and it was there we held our class.

The market-place, with Motte's house in the center, was on a hill from which six streets descended into a flat stretch of open country. From Zeviah's room, the only upper floor in town, one could see the whole town with its gardens and orchards, and in the distance the outlying green fields and the forest. Through the open, broad windows the sun fell into her room, friendly, smiling, and the endless sky drew close and throbbed and breathed in your face. In this room she spent the solitary hours which she managed to steal, away from the turmoil below. It was like a nest of quiet dreams, suspended above the tumult of the street.

Entering her room in the morning I would find her alone, seated by the window with some needle-work in her hand. She was as fresh as the morning reflected in her face. She was a tall, young woman, with a delicate and supple body. Her step was proud, quiet, Sabbath-like, and her mouth was charming and innocent. Her eyes, large and black, were full of dreamy quiet and a drowsy, magical power. Her pale, slightly oval face was filled always with a strange light that came from within and shone through the delicate skin; and the warm sunlight, falling upon her cheeks, penetrated her skin and entered her blood, so full of light she was! Her smile was like a drowsy soft flame, and her voice tasted of roses.

At my coming she would slowly raise her long, soft lashes, look at me a moment, get up, and with a smile answer my "Good morning." She would then lower her eyes and go out to call my pupils, who were occupied elsewhere.

I would sometimes try to detain her a few moments by drawing her into conversation. At first this was difficult. She was timid and shy as a bird. But gradually she became accustomed to me and somewhat less restrained. After awhile I noticed that she would linger on some slight pretext so she might talk with me a little longer. I began coming a few minutes earlier. She was grateful. In this way we became friends.

She was lonesome, without young friends, without anyone who could understand the dreams, the hopes and desires of youthful blood. In me, a man of the city, of culture and refinements, she could hope

to find genuine sympathy. Neither her husband nor her sisters-in-law could give her this.

And to me, cut off from the living world, this beautiful woman, this rare and delicate being, was a marvelous find. Just a few moments in the day, the sight of her face, of her beautiful white hands, the sound of her voice, and my days became sweet and joyful. Each passing day drew us closer, and our relations became warmer and more intimate.

But the closer she drew to me the harder I found it to be satisfied with so little. Every time I approached her door my heart beat with anticipation, with joy. I had for her a thousand sweet phrases. But no sooner did I see her than I became silent.

Could I tell her that I loved her? Even if she found no offense in my words she would nevertheless withdraw. She did not love me. And if she did? Women like her sooner smother their hearts together with their love than deceive their husbands. If I should succeed in stirring her passions, it would bring only pain to her. What would be the end of it? Where could we share our love? In her home, among so many people, under so many eyes where her every move was watched, where we were never alone for a minute? What opportunities had I for a meeting with her? She did not go anywhere and could not, without awakening suspicion.

But despite these difficulties, and perhaps even because of them, I could not give her up. In these very difficulties I saw my hope. Because her life was so monotonous, so joyless, I could win her to me. I was certain that once a spark fell into the stores of her virginal energies it would burst into flame. Let her but be touched by a moving, deep passion and she would be mine. The calmness of her life would no longer satisfy her.

But a minute later I reproached myself for my plotting. No! I must not think of it again. Lay a snare for this helpless, wonderful creature who, confident in her innocence and pride, trusting in her own nobility, could not possibly sense the danger? Her life was in my hands and I must spare her. How could I take upon myself such a responsibility? What would I bring her to? Relish the sweetness of her surrender, and then leave her, heart-stricken, to her conscience? No, no, I must not even think of it! Leave things as they are. Let the days flow in a quiet, sweet dream of innocent fellowship.

But every time I saw her, every time my eyes fell upon her figure, her face, every time I went up to her room, and the perfume of her

being which filled it, would sweep over me, every time that I thought of her nest filled with her gentle dreams, with her feminine grace, her beautiful eyes, her white body, her barefoot step, my heart would contract with longing and desire. How sweet was the thought that this hanging nest would fill with love of me; that in her solitary hours she would sit on this stool and dream of me; that there she would stand by the window and look into the street and watch me go by and my footsteps would echo in her life; in the quiet, shimmering, fragrant summer nights she would open the window, and paled by the light of the moon, she would stare over the streets, over the house-tops to my house, to my window, reaching toward me her white arms and calling to me—calling to me with warm trembling lips.

The days were passing. Winter went and Spring came once more. Spring was marvelous in this muddy town. The fresh rains washed away winter's mud and gloom; the deep, open, blue sky embraced the little town as the ocean surrounds a small island, and bathed and washed and purified it. The sun came and spread over the town its meshes of light that caught the blue of the sky and falling upon roofs, walls and fences softened them. The orchards and the neighboring green fields filled the streets with the spirit of fresh, growing green, and with the odor of lilacs, lilies of the valley, and apple blossoms. The birches at the far ends of the street tossed their heads, covered themselves with delicate green and silver leaves, and like muted bells swaying in the fresh breeze, spread a gentle, summery unrest in the air. Visible from the marketplace the distant blue forest awoke thoughts of its long, cool, quiet, mossy aisles, of ancient oaks and of young barefoot peasant girls with their pitchers of strawberries and aprons full of gold-headed mushrooms.

And the voice of the distant woods, the odor of lilacs and of the upturned earth moved me. Or was it the starry, silent nights that entered my blood and intoxicated me? Perhaps it was the odor of her body and the light of her eyes?

Early one morning, finding Zeviah in her room, my lips opened with an outburst of passion and love. She listened to me, visibly confused, and left the room without a word. From that moment she acted toward me as to a stranger. There was in her eyes so much aloofness that in humiliation I began to think that the whole period of our friendship had been an idle illusion.

Then she began to keep out of my sight. When I came to her room I would find my pupils already assembled.

I knew my fate. I must leave the town. I lost all patience with my pupils. I was filled with disgust for everything. I decided to leave town as soon as I could and began to sell my belongings. I dismissed my pupils one by one. I was preparing to depart and waited impatiently for the day when I would set off.

But one morning walking into Zeviah's room, for my last class I found her waiting for me. I do not recall what I said to her. I am not at all certain that we spoke. I do not know how it came about, but suddenly I found her in my arms. I do not recall clearly anything that happened that morning. I remember only how, trembling, she nestled close and wept, passionately. Neither my reassuring words nor my warm kisses could quiet her. Poor Zeviah! How this storm must have been gathering in her bosom! For a few moments she lost herself in my kisses, then she slipped from my arms, and with a wonderful smile, with downcast eyes, but with so much happiness in her face, she disappeared quickly.

"She loves me! She is mine!" my heart shouted.

A few days later I saw her, but she was not alone. I was unable to speak to her. But there was no need. She raised her eyes and looked at me, and that was enough. Passion and love flowed out of her eyes to me, and something else besides, something I know not how to name, and which I did not know by any of the senses, but which I recognized at once; something that had in it both life and death. It was a glance that frightened me. It seemed to me that she penetrated to my very soul; that she looked through and through me—into the obscurest nooks of my being. It made me fearful: Am I great enough for her love? Can I meet her, heart to heart?

My life, up to this time, had been so trifling!

A week passed; then a second. One day I received a letter from her. It was written in pencil, hastily:

"Wednesday night my husband will not be at home. Come at two. If there is a light in my window, come up. Be careful."

Just these few words, unsigned, and no more. What a simple matter! Why burden yourself with all sorts of impossible fears? What did I fear? Why did my conscience vex me? It was such a simple matter. Here's woman's love for you. Passion flares up in her like a flame and consumes everything. "My husband will not be at home. Come at two. Be careful." That is all.

O you dear, lovely girl! How my heart was full of her. Yes—everything was so simple and natural to her. She wanted me and sent

me a brief note: "My husband will not be at home. Come!" And I will go, open the door, enter her room and—a stream of fire flooded my mind whenever I thought of my first visit to her room at night.

Wednesday came and I went to her. I walked through back streets and alleys, crept over fences and hedges, to what purpose? I hardly knew. In an outlying street I had to fight off the dogs that beset me. What was I doing there? Why did I crawl into a garden and pick flowers only to throw them into a well?

A light shined in her room. I ascended the stairs, found the door unbarred and entered.

I thought that as soon as she saw me she would fall into my arms, and yield herself to my caresses. I pictured her in my mind: in her nightdress, her wonderful hair falling in masses about her bared shoulders; her white, bare arms shining in the moon; her eyes kindled in the dusk of the room, abashed but happy. How many days and nights I had thought and dreamed of this room, filled with the intimate sweet secrets of her loveliness.

When I entered the room I found a strange woman, dressed stiffly in black, who admitted me but remained standing at the door. She was weak, helpless and broken. I could not believe it was she. I took a step toward her. She raised her head and looked at me with such sorrowful, pleading eyes that I realized at once that I must leave her alone if I did not mean to pain her. But I could not understand. By the light of the lamp I saw that she was pale; that there was not a drop of blood in her lips; that the trace of tears was still fresh upon her face. For awhile she regarded me distrustfully and then she left her place at the door and blew out the lamp. The room was dark, with only the moon to light it. With trembling limbs I went up to her, took her hand and brought it to my lips. But her hand remained cold and lifeless. My heart sank. I released her hand and waited in silence.

A long time passed in silence. I did not know what to do nor what to say to her. Here was no call for words. Besides, what could I say to her? I waited for a sign from her.

My manner encouraged her. Her face, I thought, became clearer and soon there appeared her sweet smile. I won her confidence.

"It was too bold of me," she began quietly, "my calling you here under such suspicious circumstances. But I hope you understand my situation. I had to speak with you and I could find no other way. Where could I meet you for a talk? All other ways are barred to me. I should need nothing more than to awaken the suspicions of my mother—

in-law's family. As it is, my life is not worth a groat. But I had to take the chance. I have done you an injustice. You were preparing to leave and because of me you remained. It was an unfortunate misunderstanding. Our last meeting was a strange event which I myself cannot understand. It would be false, however, to carry away the impression that it meant anything. I beg you to forget it!"

She spoke quickly, heatedly, as if in a fever. Her voice, which she did not dare raise above a whisper, was so earnest and frank that I could not doubt her truthfulness. I wanted to interrupt her at every word to assure her of my deepest devotion and love, but I could not. Profound regret and sorrow oppressed me and I could not bring myself to talk.

"It was a foolish mistake," she continued, "I have become wiser since, and you must not attach any false meaning to it. I beg you to forget. I can love no other than my husband, and I assure you there is no room in my heart for anyone else. You are superior to him in all respects, but he is my husband and I have given him my heart. He is without culture, but he is not as coarse as one might suppose. He is noble-hearted and good to me. I love him and everything else is madness. I do not question your honesty for a minute. I believe you do not regard me as a plaything for an idle moment, as a toy with which to pass your time. For this reason I cannot assume a false role and that is why I resolved to invite you here to open my heart to you. It would not be fair to you nor to my husband to permit you to regard me as your sweetheart. I cannot be that. My heart does not belong to you. Leave this place, and forget me. . . ."

Thus she spoke in a gentle voice, earnestly, confidently, quickly, almost feverishly, as if fearing that she might forget to say something she thought necessary, as if fearing that I might interrupt her before she had time to convince me. I listened to her and did not know what to think or believe. For a moment it seemed to me this was all pre-arranged—that she was just drawing me on. But was it possible that she would do this? For a moment I was convinced by her open-hearted words and began to believe the truth of what she said. Then it seemed to me that she doubled herself, that she was asking her own heart to believe her faithful to her husband. It was her helplessness, her weakness speaking in these words. All I needed was to take her into my arms and all her doubts would vanish. I must conquer her with my love and passion.

Two steps brought me to her side and I held her in my arms, breaking the flow of her words. I lifted her and carried her to her bed. She made no opposition. She did not struggle. She began to cry quietly.

I released her and with bowed head went out of her room.

"You would have found me dead, tomorrow." I heard her words before I walked out. She spoke quietly, passively.

For years those words haunted me. But I did not believe her then. A bitter laugh was my answer to her.

II.

Years intervened before I saw her again. The morning after that night I fled the town and Zeviah. I went back to my native town, led a gay life, went to balls, to beer gardens, gaming houses and gay women. I forgot Zeviah. I found women more beautiful than she.

One day, however, I was seized by such longing to see her again that I could not resist.

I made the trip and stopped at Motte the baker's. They welcomed me gladly, particularly Zeviah. It seemed to me she had become more beautiful. She told me at once that she had a little girl of two. She set her mind on taking me to see the child that was asleep in her room. I followed her.

When I entered her room and was there alone with her, the three years I had spent in my native city dropped from my life. It seemed to me it was just last night that I was in this room, holding her in my arms, that only yesterday—

"Listen, madame," I said to her after I had heard the praises of her little girl—"the last time I was in this room I heard a few words out of your mouth which I cannot yet understand. Won't you tell me what you meant?"

She grew red, then white and again red, looked at me, then at the baby in the cradle. She asked, naively, "What could those words have been?"

"Listen!" I said to her, "I have loved you for years, from the day I first saw you to this moment. Weeks, months, years, I have lived with your smile and the light of your eyes. Years will pass—a lifetime in which I will not have you. For three years I have longed for you and yet have done without you, although I envied the servant in your house and the drunken peasant to whom you serve a glass of whiskey. I shall live without you for years and years. But you can-

not ever take from me those few moments when you were in my arms nor the intoxicating, insane thought, the wild dream that I could have had you that night, that you gave yourself to me, freely, without struggle or opposition! Did that night have so little significance that you have forgotten it all? "You would have found me dead tomorrow—have you already forgotten?"

She looked into my eyes with a strange look in her own and then smiled: "Oh, but it is so long since! You must surely have understood what I said to you, didn't you? The very next morning you went away. How did you spend those three years? . . . It must be fine to live in a large city."

Suddenly she changed her tone of voice and began praising her child. "Don't you think she will take after me?"

I remained in the town. I rarely saw Zeviah. I could get no lessons at her house and I had no means of approaching her except when I met her casually in the street with her daughter. We would stop, exchange a few friendly words and go our ways. She seemed contented and even happy.

Several months passed in this way.

Then I heard that her child had died.

Poor Zeviah!

Three months later Zeviah was mine.

She found a simple way for us to meet. She prevailed upon her husband to let her take lessons to drive from her mind her longing for the child. She was melancholy and she would go about, pale and disconsolate even in my presence. Her husband was happy she had found a distraction. He loved her devotedly. He was genuinely good to her.

Now also she would rise hastily at my coming as if she were frightened. She would place my hand over her heart and I could feel her heart beat, more quickly, uneasily, frightened. She would sit half an hour without a word, her fingers entangled in mine, pressing them lightly, almost painfully, and look into my eyes, listening to what I was saying; look with such an intense, longing, hungry glance that I could not bear it. At times her glance made me shudder. She had never kissed me, but she would eagerly turn her cheeks for my kiss. When I took her in my arms, she became faint with repressed emotions. It seemed to me she was overcome with the richness of her untapped passions. I saw she was being consumed by some inner fire deep in her soul. At times I thought it was fear—at times that it was sorrow. Perhaps she did not trust me. Perhaps she did not believe in my love.

Perhaps she feared it would soon break off. When I asked her about it she answered briefly: "What fear can I have for the morrow? Tomorrow does not exist for me. Today is enough for me."

"Do you regret loving me?"—I demanded.

"What have I besides your love?" she replied.

"Why then, are you unhappy?"

"But I am happy," she insisted, and pressed my head tenderly to her bosom.

"Why do you suffer?"

"No, I am not suffering."

"Are you happy?"

"Yes, I am happy," she assured me. "Your love makes me happy."

"Why, then, are you more devoted to your husband than to me?"

"Don't talk that way, I beg you," she pleaded. "I belong to you. I am entirely yours, body and soul. Every part of my body calls for you. But in a different way."

"No, those are mere words," I protested. "You give yourself to him and not to me."

"Wait—be patient—I cannot yet," she pleaded with me. "How can you doubt my love? Wait, I will convince you."

What was she waiting for? I did not understand her. My demands became more importunate. I tortured her with my jealousy and distrust.

Finally she yielded to me.

It was summer. We had arranged to meet in their orchard, which was in bloom and which ran from underneath her window to the end of the yard. An arbor stood there, covered over with vines and creepers and flowers, where birds made their nests. I waited there one night.

Her husband was to go to some fair that night. He was to leave at midnight, travel all night, reach the town early next morning in time to find a good place with his cart of scythes.

When he departed from the house, leaving her asleep, she was to come to me in the garden.

I lay in wait a long time. I heard the noise and tumult of the dram shop die out. The drunken peasants drove off, singing wildly on their way home. The belated guests departed. The lamps went out. It became quiet. I waited a long time. Every minute was a year.

At last I heard footsteps in the garden. She had come!

Her love had ripened like a tropical fruit.

She was in her night gown, warm from bed. She sat on my knees, put her naked arms about my neck and pressed my face to her warm breasts. "Now, I am yours," she said quietly, as in a faint.

But suddenly she leaped up in fright. Steps were heard on the cobblestones of the courtyard. The door of the garden creaked. Someone was coming!

We slipped quickly through the doorway of the arbor and hid in the raspberry bushes growing by the outer wall.

The steps came closer. We soon recognized her husband. We heard his voice. He spoke quickly to someone who followed him. They approached the arbor.

We are lost! Her husband had trapped us. I was not worried about myself, but my God, what will happen to Zeviah? She will not survive the shame!

I reached my hand to her in the darkness and my heart was anguished. It was all because of me. I had brought upon her the shame with which the town would resound the next day. Poor, poor Zeviah!

Suddenly my heart stood still for joy. In the darkness she took my hand, placed it upon her bosom and then brought it to her mouth and kissed it.

In what way could anything in the world matter now? In this crucial moment I first discovered my real Zeviah. That is Zeviah's love! What does she care for the world? Let him find us. My heart filled with a deep feeling of faith unto death for my proud queen. In that instant I could have done anything for her sake. I wanted to run out of my hiding place and cry out to her husband, to the whole world, the wonderful event that Zeviah was with me, that she had come to meet me in the garden, that she loved me and that we cared for nothing in the world!

There was no doubt he had come to look for us. He entered the arbor with their maid, a young peasant girl. Now I understood how he had learned of our love for one another. The maid had surprised us several times. We took consolation in the fact that she was a naive peasant who was unobservant. But she had told him everything. Apparently she had overheard our plan to meet in the arbor—and she had told him about it. O, let him come!

Suddenly I heard something—ha, ha, ha!
Zeviah's face must have burned with shame. Her husband, whom

she had so feared to deceive, was deceiving her, before her very eyes, with their servant, an ignorant peasant girl! What years of suffering and struggle she had experienced before she had yielded to me. How hard it had been for her to decide to accept my love, although she loved me! She was prepared to sacrifice her heart, her happiness, her life out of loyalty to him. How she had struggled with me and with herself! And all this time her husband was deceiving her. And with whom!

"Well, my foolish little woman?" I turned to her when we left our hiding place. "Now will your conscience be stilled? You must give me back my five, lost years!"

I caught her passionately in my arms. My heart was jubilant. Ha, ha, ha! What a revenge! She would never have believed it had it been told to her. She had seen it with her own eyes.

But what was the matter with her? Was she cold? She was shivering.

"My sweet little silly. Come, with my kisses I will warm you! Now no one can take you from me! You are mine!"

But she remained seated, as if petrified. Tenderly she pushed me from her and drew her shawl about her. . . .

"Zeviah, dearest—!"

"Oh, leave me, I cannot now . . . I beg you."

She rose quickly and as if drunk, she started toward the house. I ran after and caught her.

"No, leave me," she pleaded with a choked voice. "Leave me, I cannot do what he . . . I cannot . . . how ugly!"

And with quick steps she disappeared into the house.

III

Zeviah made up her mind to leave her husband and go with me to the city. Our plan was that I should leave first, find a position, prepare a home for her. She would follow.

One morning I took my leave of Zeviah and started off. I received a letter from her every day. In her letters she first opened to me her deep love.

Some time passed before I was settled. To begin with I did not find a satisfactory position, and besides, I did not earn enough. Then I began preparing a home for her. What joy to go about making purchases for our home! Nothing was good enough for me. I lived only for her. My every thought was of her. Day and night I dreamed

and thought of the happiness that would be mine in this small, cozy home I had arranged for us. Day followed day. I imagined how deep would be her joy when she would enter her home and see everything I had prepared.

One morning I received a letter from her which destroyed my dream. It was a short note in which she informed me, that she could not come to me. She had realized that she did not love me. She had had a reconciliation with her husband and they were at peace with one another. If I could forgive her, well and good. If not, no matter. She was doing the bidding of her heart. Adieu!

Naturally I did not want to believe this. I went to her immediately.

When I notified her of my arrival, she refused to receive me. I threatened I would make a public scandal. It was of no avail. She did not want to see me. I went to her house uninvited. She met me, calmly, coldly, as if nothing had ever occurred between us. She said something to her new maid and the latter left the room.

I was alone with her, but not for long. Before I had time to collect my thoughts, her husband came into the room. She had sent for him. Now I saw there was no hope for me. I wished to leave the room at once. My heart was full of bitterness, of hatred toward her and myself. She detained me. "Before you go," she said to me, "say what you came to say. My husband may hear what you have to tell me. He knows all."

I looked at him. He was pale, sallow, his lips pressed together. His eyes were bloodshot. But he stood calmly. She did not dare look at him. She looked at me with tears in her eyes.

"Yes, my husband knows all," she continued. "I have told him of each of our secret meetings. I told him that the morning you left I was in your rooms and gave myself to you. If you have anything to add, do so now. He knows also of our arrangement that I was to leave him and go to you in the city. . . ."

That very day I left the town never to return. My life was broken. I moved about the city like a shadow. My one consolation was the home I had prepared for her. I left it unchanged. I would go there every day and think of my Zeviah and dream of the days I might have spent with her. Nothing else was left to me. But from time to time—in hours of agony—in lonely, solitary nights, she would come to me in that room. I would speak to her and my voice, echoing in a strange way in the empty house, frightened me. Often in the crystal

mirror I would see reaching toward me a pair of pale hands, fingers caught together in pain. Twice I thought I saw her coming toward me in her night-gown, like a sleep-walker. Out of the mirror she came to me. She told me that she loved me, that she longed for me, that she was dying with longing for me—yet I did not hear the sound of a human voice.

I was destined, however, to hear that from her own lips!

One day I received a telegram from the town of K., urging me to come at once. Zeviah was dying. She wanted to see me. She had taken poison.

She was dying, but I found her fully conscious. Her husband left us.

I sank beside her bed and hid my face in her lap. I felt her weak hands caress my neck so gently and tenderly. Two tears rolled down her cheeks.

"I thank you for coming," she began weakly. "I wanted to see you once more. I know you love me and forgive me everything. I have loved you all my life, from the first moment I saw you. No, earlier than that, in my girlish dreams I loved you. I loved no one but you. But I met you too late. It was too late. I could not live without you. My heart drew me to you, but I could not go away. I could not forgive me! My life was not a happy one, yet I have no regrets for I tasted happiness. I regret only that you suffered because of me. But I am consoled in the knowledge that once I was yours as you wished. You will not forget me. . . . Oh, if you knew how deeply I loved you! But it is better so. I could not lead this life any longer. You are the only one I have loved. . . ."

She had no more strength to speak and she was silent. For awhile she looked at me with her dreadfully large eyes. She wanted to say something to me, but could not. She fell into a convulsion.

Oh, my God! My poor, poor Zeviah!
And we buried her.

I wandered about in the town for a few weeks without knowing why: I could not see Zeviah any more. But I felt I had to mourn for her in the place where I had loved and lost her. I could not think of leaving without one more visit to her grave. There was no stone and I wandered all over the cemetery looking for the fresh mound of earth. From afar I saw a man beside a grave. When I approached I recognized Zeviah's husband. I wanted to turn aside, but it was too late. He had seen me and called to me. It was not at all an agreeable thing

for me to meet this man, although something drew me to him. For awhile we stood by the new mound of earth, our heads bent, in silence. He did not weep, but tears were in his voice when he began to speak.

"I know that you loved one another. She was well-fitted for you. She loved you very much. I knew this even before you went away the first time. She was unhappy all the time. She was pining for you. Many times I wished to go to you to bring you to her. I was always trying to persuade her to go to you. I wished to give her a divorce, but she would not have it. Oh, how much she suffered! She sought to hide her suffering from me, but I knew of it. She would get out of bed in the middle of the night and, thinking I was asleep, she would walk from room to room wringing her hands, and stretching them out to you—far away, calling you. I could not bear her suffering. I was ready to give my life for her. O—you know how much one could love her. I think the reason she did not leave me was because she knew how much I loved her. But tell me, do you think she also had some love for me?"

He wept like a child.

I drew this poor, kindly fellow to me and pressed him to my heart. I understood more clearly now the noble soul of Zeviah.

Realism and the Artist

By JAMES RENNEL

Returning to New York after a prolonged stay in the country, I chanced to walk into a dingy restaurant, west of Ninth Avenue, where a quarrel was later precipitated between two sullen workmen who had been rubbing each other the wrong way for some time; and the opportunity to listen to the spoken language of the people was thrust upon me. Alas! it was borne home on me what had been clearly evident before: while the gestures themselves were fierce and the visages flaming, the tongues were locked and the language was dead. Every third word plucked out of extremely meagre vocabularies was a dirty one to lend force where force was inchoate. What was most gentle and most delicate in themselves, they could not touch with their fumbling abused hands.

I could simply watch at the table and guess at the lives behind the masks, the poverty, the oppression, the slavery to a routine, which left the men withered husks, or rather, noisy machines whose cogs had never been oiled.

If a man were to write a story or a play about them, I reflected, how would he use their speech as a direct translation of their tortured thoughts and feelings? If as they did, speech would be real in a sense that it was true to them; but as the first requisite of art is life, something torturingly alive, could it be said that there was the necessary quality in their language? No. But the artist, in recreating the scene, must capture the vividness and intensity that these men feel but cannot express—he must be these men, their spokesman, and yet far more than that. How is he to achieve this consummation? At that time I thought of several ways of bringing them into aesthetic focus—all of them realistic in that they told the truth. But what truth? What truth, indeed! Life has many facets.

Here are the ways:

(1) By suggesting what these men felt, but could not express. Anderson's method. The inward richness, the outer wall; and decay. Eager to express themselves, they are unable to speak out with subtler, perhaps truer, emotion, so they touch hands only over the wooden tables of beer, smut or some other easy debauchery. But their real selves are hidden in a mask. And yet, ironically, they are hardly aware of their tragedy, maladjustment, and disease; for the shoos that put forth from the waters withered and the swamps breathed forth a miasma. Here the souls sickened and died, lost in an aesthetic, not religious sense. All men have dreams. This method seeks to portray the hopes and dreams that are still-born. Shakespeare sought to portray the tragedy of one man: this method seeks to portray the tragedy of democratised millions. Shakespeare portrayed men's loves, hopes, desires, as if all men were as expressive as himself. In the speech of these modern men, there would be moments of expressiveness, followed by spasms of vacuity, but a very expressive vacuity. While Shakespeare's characters were poetic, these modern men are distorted, gnarled, vivid torsos—powers—parts of the machine; but the delicate, imaginative and spontaneous—those winged spirits from the other world crying out through the hearts of men, have been strangled in a steel cage. The men are dead and dying.

(2) By poetising. Not making wood-cut marionettes out of them—although that is just and permissible, the marionette quality being there—but by anticipating the poetry people still feel in tense moments and clumsily struggle toward. This method, used by Robert Frost, overlaps the other. Men sense something grand and mysterious, it may be the moon or the wintry night, or the faces of their beloved; but like the half-blind, they cannot grasp the significance of their own terrible emotions. This man says "wonderful," trying to describe the fluid night or the glowing face of his girl. But does the word have the same meaning in both instances? No. Rather in the second instance it expresses a series of pleasant agitations that can only be described by music of notes or word: the "wonderful" is the theme—the fugue is the inward development of the emotion. To suggest all this without the means of music would be the task of the artist who chose this difficult, most real method. In moments when the meaning flashes forth, men rise above their material existence to something more than animal. The artist gives both the moment and the seeking, the holding forth of hungry

hands. In love men say one thing, attempt another. In this attempt is the bud. The artist anticipates the flower. Artists cooperate with life, and bring it to flower. The artist is parasite and creator, he is the demonic urge with a pair of eyes.

(3) By writing the dialogue with the power inherent in the people themselves—another way of poetising. But there must also be power in the artist; he feels the effect of the machine on men who have retained something of the intense steely quality of the dynamo. Their brute strength compensates for many of the more subtle qualities and gives fullness and breadth to their characters. When the "naturalist" writes in this manner, he is far more than he pretends to be; he is the creator who lends his force to the scene. And the modern scene, in which power is romantic, affords unlimited possibilities. This is the method of Eugene O'Neill.

(4) By making the humility of these men stand out as something of awe and wonder at the universe—of its crushing compact power—and the weak littleness of themselves. However, as the Americans are neither humble nor modest, this method could hardly be employed with success here.

(5) By grotesquing the whole situation—overdrawing to show the ridiculous side and arid pretensions of the men: sympathetically this method would be comedy, ironically satire. In the very weakness, pliability of ordinary men, one scents a tragedy in the comedy: chaff before the wind. Negative qualities . . .

But the ways and means of portraying the scene could be multiplied to infinity. The public may view life from one angle, the artist from another; but the public will call its method realism. I mean the art public . . . which hasn't learned that realism has no meaning and that there is only art and non-art.

The artist can perform the miracle of raising the dead because of the manifest life in him. This secret, known since the beginning of the world, has been shared between artists and mystics; but ordinary men are phantoms who move in a mist of prejudices and dreams. The artist, with the mystic's innocence of mind, can see what is before him; he knows himself too—there's the point! *Knowledge!*—he gives us not only life as it is statically, but in its eternal movement and change.

In His Cups

By HENRY GOODMAN

Luigi Baldissera, Third Assistant Engineer, is Italian, and this particular moment sees him tacking unsteadily toward his ship.

It is not Luigi's being in his cups that makes him interesting. Other drunken engineers go rolling back to their ships, their lips wet with rum, their tongues gay with ribaldry. Luigi is neither jovial nor hilarious. He is woefully penitent.

He is repentant for the many inevitable hypocrisies forced upon him by life and the world—hypocrisies which cloak his true nature, as he would have you know. On the ship Luigi is regarded as a good engineer, reliable, steady. He is a stanchion, a bulwark of order and discipline. Within himself, however, he is at odds with the very world that accepts him and relies upon him to guard its welfare. He is seething with rebellions, with hatreds and dissatisfaction. The men he bullies he loathes for their submissiveness; the men he obeys he hates for their power and arbitrariness.

Ask any of those below decks what they think of the Third Assistant and you will hear: "He knows his work—that Wop. He's a hard one for you." "You gotta be alive for him. He keeps you at it like the engines."

Never a word of a human relationship toward the men—much as if he were a machine requiring the same incessant service which the oilers and mechanics give their humming, steel masters.

And his face, as he walks amidships before turning in, bears still the stern aspect, the unrelenting hardness of one who feels himself always under watchful eyes.

But at such a time as this, with the turbulence of drink strong within him, in self-debasement and self-censure, he unburdens his heart.

He is lurching bare-headed down the dock to the ship. You can trail his coming by the frequent, sudden gasps of penetrating light

emitted by his pocket lamp. The rays fall indiscriminately, lighting up the bags of sugar ranged in regular, even rows and the brown mounds of sugar-grains spilled from torn burlaps and trampled by many feet.

Roman, night-watchman, with eyes laughing in the dark, looks down on the engineer at the gang-plank under the one light swung from the ship's side. For the last two hours he has looked on at a slow, straggling procession of drunken firemen and seamen. He has just completed his round of the sleeping ship and leans meditatively over the rail. With amusement he watches Luigi's several attempts to lift his unwilling feet to the lowest step. Luigi's left hand and arm are held close about an earthenware jug of rum; his right hand, holding the electric lamp, directs a wavering cone of light upon the lowest step.

"Hey, watchman," Luigi calls imploringly. His voice breaks with his effort to curb its self-willed vagaries. He repeats his call, cautiously and with the faint hope that the watchman may be near and kindly disposed.

Roman smother's his laughter. In the sharp light Luigi's stumbling about becomes comical. His black, curly hair, loosely massed, shakes at every tentative move in his progress.

He turns his reddened face up toward the light. His eyes, brilliant, sweep along the rail of the ship.

"Hey, watchman," he calls again, beseechingly, "I'm here."

"So I see," says Roman.

"I'm disgracefully drunk, watchman. I want your help."

A twinge of remorse speeds Roman down the gangplank. He had not really wanted so humiliating a confession from Luigi.

Up the two come together, the engineer mercifully silent and sobored on the swinging climb. Then, the deck underfoot, Luigi turns in gratitude toward Roman. His speech is singularly clear and careful for one so rum-logged.

"Help yourself—cigarettes in my pocket."

Roman hesitates. He feels that the sudden generosity is born of drink and he is loath to avail himself of the offer. Luigi's eyes plead for the acceptance of his hospitality. To supplement his plea he sets down the jug and slips into his pocket the flashlight with its tiny eye flaring in protest.

With one hand he steadies himself against the rail, while the other seeks out Roman's arm. He stares at Roman, who lights a cigarette and then his eyes, melancholy and friendly, wander gravely towards the few lights of Santiago.

"I am going to propound a paradox," he announces as his eyes come back to Roman's. "You know what a paradox is, of course. When I am dead drunk, I am most sober. My head is clear and I can see what goes on around me. D'you see? You've read Shaw, he's the founder of Shawianism or Fabianism or some such business. Well, when Shaw is drunk with humor—that's his way of getting a hearing—he is most seriously sober." He halts in time to stop a sudden swaying forward. He is uncertain whether or not he has said what he started out to say and repeats "seriously sober."

At Roman's glance, Luigi stops. He gathers his thoughts together after asking, "What was I saying?" and continues:

"Oh, yes; I would never put myself with Shaw. But if I want to speak out, if I want to throw off the yoke of acquiescence, I may do so only behind the shield of intoxication."

He studies Roman's face for a sign of friendly understanding. And Roman wonders at the engineer's face under the ship's light. The broken kindness of the lines in the face, the softness about the mouth. This is a different man, one who has found liberation from a burden that was heavy on his mind and spirit.

"I, Luigi Baldissera, am stewed. I sink with gin,—smell!" He exhales with comical care and an alcoholic breeze assails Roman's nose.

"My God, I say to myself, 'Luigi, what are you doing on this ship? Here you are, swilling yourself drunk when you are sober and sobering up by tyrannizing over the men.' The other day one of my oilers, Mike, was slow. I cursed at him. Would you believe it—I hit him a crack in the face! Why? Did I want to strike him? No! The chief was bawling me out—engines not running smoothly. I took it out on Mike. Maybe he was sick. Maybe he did not feel like working. Well, am I a slave-driver? Is a human being a machine?"

"Why not put that up to the chief," Roman suggests,—his hand touching the engineer with steady effect. "Surely the chief is a man who understands. He knows he cannot work the men too hard."

"Go talk with the chief!" Luigi's voice rings incredulous. "Tell him you think the men are human beings—that you are not a slave-master! He laughs in your face. He laughed in my face, the idiot. Imagine, laughed at Luigi Baldissera."

Luigi's words, calling attention to himself, are strangely alive in the heavy quiet of the ship and the dock. Far below there is the soft

lap, lap of water against the side of the ship, and beyond the dock, in the vibrant darkness, a light is dipping up and down.

Roman, observing Luigi, is amazed at the change that has come over him. Frequently enough he has seen the engineer; through the portholo he has looked into Luigi's cabin and seen him beneath the light, book open to some fascinating page. Once when he walked through the companionway the door was open and in a shelf near the door he had seen some of the books—Gorky, Gacosa, D'Annunzio and Hardy, were the names of some of the authors. He has come to know Luigi as reticent—as contained wholly within himself. Here is such a loosening of restraint, such a complete yielding to the up-bubbling springs of speech that he sees revealed a new man. He is held by the compelling earnestness with which his companion speaks and by a deep undertone of conflict within the man.

And listening, Roman feels that there is such sobriety and clarity in what Luigi is saying as never even to suggest drunkenness, unless the impetus with which he speaks may be taken for an admission of intoxication. The others of the crew show it unmistakably, most of them in a stolid lethargy that holds them immovable and insensate. On the other hand, Hodgins, that very night drunk, had been carried back to the ship on an irrepressible tide of song that rose and swelled within him. Tom Flores, great of leg and heavy of body, is made strangely light and graceful when his eyes grow luminous with drink. Without regard to the place, cafe or street or deck, Tom is propelled invariably into the fantastic steps of a dance of his own creating. It is always the same dance, starting with the same undulating, sensual movements of his torso, surprisingly flexible in one of his years and bulk.

How different is this man! His words with their even flow and definite set, come from unexpected depths. There is a tenderness in his voice as if he were pleading for comprehension, and also there is a confession of loneliness. Only occasionally there is a slowing up in his words, as if he were put to the need of extricating them from the confusion and turbulence caused by the run he had gulped down.

"They pride themselves on their democracy—the officers," he continues. "Americans they are. They tell you that on the least occasion. But you fellows in the fore-castle—you will pardon me, watchman, you fellows are just Dagoes and Greasers, dirt." He spoke the word Dago with a little hurt pause in his voice. "And who is it makes the ships to go and carry? And who is it spins the web of commerce across the seas and oceans? Is it those fellows up there in their

cool cabins? You may leave it to me to tell them the truth. It's you, the Dagos and Greasers, with the love of mankind in your hearts, even if you don't know it's there; you with the lice crawling all over you, that's right, scratch yourself watchman—let me lend a hand."

His moist eyes lave in their glowing love the face, the head, the body of Roman. His kind, uncertain hand rubs across the small of Roman's back.

"But not to wander from our subject," Luigi goes on after a pause in which he has taken a great swallow from his jug, with a warning to Roman to keep away from rum, "they have just got through with a war—a war to bring peace to the world. Do they even know what peace is? Do they really mean to let their own people taste something of the joy of living? The Russians—that's what they want for their people. Think of it, Roman. Here is one life we have—one wink at the sky and the sea—and always we are bound hand and foot to the machines. We are making of life—what? Money and more money."

"But why do you take this so seriously?" Roman asks. "Why are you so much concerned in all this?"

"Why? You ask why! Can I help being human? Can I help seeing the blindness, the unblinkiness of those who direct civilization? Civilization is for human beings, progress is for human beings. Human beings are made to serve the machines, human beings are fed to life. It should be the other way, I tell you, Roman. Life should be fed to humans, more and more of it. There would be knowledge and love instead of greed and hate."

Without warning he stoops and takes up the jug and holds it out to Roman. "I ask you, Roman, is it fair that I should drink and refuse you a drink? Take, it boy—if it's good for me, it won't kill you."

"Now, what was I saying?"

He sets down the jug from which Roman has taken a deep draught.

"Roman, what did that young revolutionist Jesus say: 'What boots it a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Nothing, boy, it doesn't pay. That's a poor philosophy of life they will tell you, the lords in their cabins and the owners of ships. They think if you look at life that way you won't fit in with their plans."

"It's funny, isn't it, how people seem born with their own ways of seeing life. Intellectuals talk about environment and heredity and

the way you are influenced by both. What talk and quarrels I used to have with my father and uncle over these matters. There was uncle, Captain Baldissera, went down with his ship in the Mediterranean. Objected to my shipping as a seaman, wanted me to go to the Naval Academy; said no Baldissera would mingle with the riff-raff, if he had anything to say about it. He went down with hundreds of his men—riff-raff."

He chuckles quietly—his eyes filling with a picture of his uncle gold-braided and be-ribboned.

"Takes a more democratic mind to go about, freely and frankly, among seamen," he says reflectively and slowly. "They're dirty and dull—you know, Roman—still scratching, eh? Why—the first few trips I made I had to have myself shaved—all of me. But you get used to it—gets so you stop bothering about most things. You sort of realize it's the workings of chance—your being on shipboard when you ought to be ashore—in Russia when here you are getting stewed in Santiago. There's the strange thing—a man isn't a ship—you can't steer him—can't dope out the chart. Here and there you drive through on your own course—a short stretch and you're caught up in something."

"But, as I was saying: I wouldn't go to the Academy. I had my mind set on going to sea as a seaman. I did it—worked on Mediterranean ships for two years—that was work I will tell you. The men—suspicious—afraid of me—couldn't make me out—thought I was a spy. There were deserters from the army. They beat me—tried to put out my eyes with white-hot irons."

"Poor wretches. What could they know about honesty—decency? They were treated like dogs; this ship, watchman, is a palace when I think of that stinking hold. They were cursed at. They were ground down. Sleep, eat and obey. That was the whole of life for them—no room to look about—to ask a question—to wonder at anything. They were ready to kill me. I saw I had to defend myself."

"There is power in an office of any kind. I made up my mind to have power. I became an oiler—I knew my engines as well as I knew my sweetheart's body. Every caprice—every little protest—every strain of them. I knew how to humor them—to soothe and cool—to put them to the strain. There was joy stroking them—coddling them—I could keep them going full-steam without their showing the least bit of fatigue. When the chance came—the third engineer died—I spoke up and took his place."

"Those men—how they kow-towed to me. Men," in his pause there was pity and contempt. "They were silent when I came by. They rushed to obey. It was 'Sir' and 'Yes, sir' when I spoke. Devil take it—are you men? Are you slaves? But who can be angry with them—so wretched—so simple and ignorant? How should they know—how should they respect themselves when those who do know stamp them underfoot? I spoke to them: 'Men—my comrades—you and I—we are the ship—we are the world—civilization. We will and we do. We work hand in hand, and ships move through the waters—carry food to men who would starve without us. The heart of God beats in us. Be men—hold up your heads—do your work because you will to do it, not because you are driven, because you take joy in yourselves—in your bodies and muscles. They understood—they felt life. You could see it in their eyes as you see dawn in the faint light in the clouds. How they worked—how they sang at the fires—in the bunks. Men were coming out of those dark bodies and minds.

"They did not like it on the bridge. 'Breaking discipline' they called it. 'Hell with your discipline,' I said, 'these are men, now, human beings are growing up below. You will treat them like human beings.'

"Someone told the men the company would drop them—throw them out of work. They were slaves again. They never sang. They were parts of the engines—they were shovels attached to the furnaces. 'Yes, sir,' 'No, sir,' again. I left the ship. I went to America."

"And do you think America is any better?" Luigi was beginning when Roman stopped him.

It is time for Roman to make his round. He lays reassuring hands upon Luigi's shoulders, hunched and firmly set, with Luigi leaning over the rail in a melancholy dream forged by his words. Roman steps down the gangway with brisk, quick steps. His heavy-shod feet resound on the steel well-deck swimming in darkness, but do not break him free of the reverie which Luigi has brought him.

How queer he had not sensed these things in Luigi before! Here was a man who wanted about him a world to conform with the glowing beauty of his dreams. What defeats were they which threw him always back upon himself, upon the realization of his weakness?

"Here and there you dive through on your own course a short stretch and you're caught up in something."

Who, observing Luigi below decks, would ever think that he was other than he appeared? The reliance upon himself, the assurance of his calm, commanding manner—no doubt there—no questioning of self! When Roman returns he finds that the Second Mate has taken his place beside Luigi. He is sampling the jug but puts it down at sight of Roman.

Luigi's voice, clear and inexhaustible, winds on: "You are wrong, Mate. You are a bully and a coward. You call them dogs. They are fine, honest men—good, loving fellows. Give them a taste of life—decent quarters—a chance to think and read and live like humans."

The Second Mate cuts him off: "Now, there, you damned Dago, it's good you forget all this bull when you're sober. And it's lucky you don't get stewed often—we'd have mutiny on board if you got drunk more frequent. Come on, turn in."

He drags Luigi by the arm and walks off, carrying the jug of rum. He pushes Luigi into his room and, still carrying the jug, goes into his own cabin.